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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 17 July 2017 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I write to alert you to the critical situation in the Occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, due to Israel's relentless provocations and illegal actions against the Palestinian people. The occupying Power continues daily to commit grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, which are exacerbating the humanitarian, social, economic, political and security situation on the ground. As a result, the hardships faced by the Palestinian civilian population continue to mount and any real possibility and hope to achieve peace based on the two-State solution on the 1967 borders are vanishing.

First, I must draw your urgent attention to the dangerous situation in Occupied East Jerusalem. Over the years, we have cautioned that Israel's pursuit of illegal policies and measures, along with incessant provocations and incitement by Jewish extremists and Israeli government officials, against the holy places in the City, especially at the Aqsa Mosque compound (Haram al-Sharif) have aggravated religious sensitivities and tensions, amounting to an explosive situation. Today, we are witnessing the same provocative actions by the occupying Power, further fuelling already-high tensions and further destabilizing the fragile situation on the ground.

Following the violent incidents on Friday, 14 July 2017, in Occupied East Jerusalem, and after the clear statement of condemnation issued by President Mahmoud Abbas in that regard, Israel has once again reneged on the assurances given to maintain and uphold the historic status quo at the Haram al-Sharif. In word and in practice, the occupying Power is doing the exact opposite. In fact, the Israeli occupying authorities implemented three days of closure, as well as "additional security measures", such as the installation of the metal detectors as well as additional security cameras outside the compound. Such measures were imposed, preventing the entry and worship of Palestinian civilians, all while Israelis and tourists continued to be allowed to enter the Old City and even the Aqsa Mosque compound. Moreover, the Mufti of Jerusalem, Sheikh Mohammad Hussein, along

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with 58 staff of the Waqf and Endowment Department, were assaulted and detained for hours of interrogations, and the occupying authorities ordered the Aqsa Mosque's guards not to go to the mosque.

Such Israeli provocations and violations of the Palestinian people's human rights, including their right to worship, will surely do nothing to "restore calm", but rather create fertile conditions for clashes and violence to continue and escalate. This is precisely what ensued today when clashes broke out between so-called Israeli police and Palestinian Muslim worshippers near the Haram al-Sharif. The Palestinian Red Crescent reported a number of injuries resulting from such clashes, including reports that the Chair of the Palestinian National Initiative and former Palestinian Minister of Information, Mustafa Barghouti, was hit in the head by a rubber bullet and taken to Al-Makassed Hospital in East Jerusalem.

We reiterate that all such illegal Israeli actions at the Haram al-Sharif and throughout the rest of Occupied East Jerusalem constitute violations of the numerous relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions calling for a cessation of all Israeli policies and measures aimed at altering the character, legal status and demography of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and calling for respect by Israel, the occupying Power, of its obligations under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits such actions. This includes the erection of metal detectors and other measures that have been taken by the occupying Power.

We condemn the closure of the Aqsa Mosque by Israel, the occupying Power, and all of the above-mentioned provocative and inflammatory measures. We call upon the international community to ensure that Israel swiftly reverses its recent measures and ends all actions and policies that harm the delicate nature of the historic status quo in order to ensure the de-escalation of this perilous situation in Occupied East Jerusalem.

At the same time, inciting statements by Israeli government officials are exacerbating the situation and must be condemned and cease. We refer in this regard to the statement by the Israeli Minister of Public Security, Gilad Erdan, who declared: "Israel holds sovereignty over the Mount, no matter what other countries' positions are, and if we decide that a certain move has a certain advantage, then it is carried out." Following this statement, the so-called Israeli "ministerial committee for legislation affairs" approved a bill, on 16 July, that "prohibits the division of Jerusalem city in any future peace deal with the Palestinians".

Such inflammatory rhetoric is clearly aimed at illegally and forcibly asserting Israeli control over the Haram al-Sharif in the heart of Occupied East Jerusalem, which remains an integral part of the Palestinian Territory occupied by Israel since 1967, and clearly also aimed as incitement against the Palestinian people and their leadership. We must recall in this regard the recent authoritative decision by the Security Council, in its resolution 2334 (2016) underscoring that "it will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations". We further stress that this holy site, the first qiblah and the third-holiest site in Islam, remains under the supervision of the Islamic Waqf and recall the special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan with regard to the Muslim and Christian holy sites in the City.

Simultaneously, Israel persists with its grave human rights violations against the Palestinian people, including the right to life. Palestinian civilians, including children, continue to be killed or seriously injured as the Israeli occupying forces and settler militias continue to use excessive, indiscriminate force against our defenceless, occupied people, with utter impunity. On 12 July, occupying forces shot and killed two young Palestinians, Aws Muhammad Youssif Salameh (age 17)

and Saad Nasser Hassan Abd al-Fattah Salah (age 20), and injured at least two other people after a violent military raid into Jenin refugee camp. Two days later, on 14 July, a Palestinian youth, Barra' Hamamdeh (age 18) was shot dead and two others sustained gunshot wounds fired by occupying forces in Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem. Arrest and detention raids also continue to be carried out daily in the West Bank, and Palestinian civilians continue to be detained, with young men and boys fiercely targeted by the Israeli occupying forces, who routinely assault, humiliate and abuse Palestinian civilians during arrest, interrogation and detention.

It is clear that without determined international action to end this abhorrent, illegal 50-year Israeli occupation and all the crimes against the Palestinian people stemming from and sustaining the occupation, Israel will continue to disregard Palestinian life and continue to act above the law, without fear of punishment or consequences. A concrete example of this is the recent decision to transfer the Israeli soldier who was convicted of shooting and executing a Palestinian as he lay wounded on the ground in March 2016 to house arrest in the coming day, reaffirming that when it comes to Israeli crimes against Palestinians, even those caught on camera, accountability and justice are totally absent.

Of course, along with such gross human rights violations, the occupying Power has persisted with its colonization of our land, constructing more settlements and the wall, confiscating and destroying Palestinian lands and properties and forcibly displacing Palestinian civilians, all in flagrant and grave breach of international humanitarian law and the Rome Statute, constituting war crimes. Just one week prior, the so-called "Israeli municipality" in Jerusalem approved the construction of another 800 settlement units in Occupied East Jerusalem. This latest illegal settlement announcement has been reported to comprise the construction of 276 units in the illegal settlement of "Pisgat Ze'ev", 120 in "Neve Ya'akov", 200 in "Ramot" and 202 in "Gillo", further isolating Jerusalem from its natural Palestinian environs and further fragmenting and destroying the contiguity of the Palestinian territory and the viability of the two-State solution on the 1967 lines, in violation of international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the international consensus in this regard.

We must also draw attention once again to the grave situation in the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian civilian population in Gaza continues to suffer immensely from the impact of Israel's suffocating, immoral decade-long blockade, an act of gross collective punishment. The dire humanitarian crisis that has prevailed there for years is worsening by the day. Here, we must recall the August 2012 United Nations country team report on Gaza, which documented the catastrophic humanitarian situation there and the deplorable socioeconomic and environmental conditions and predicted that by 2020 Gaza would be "unliveable" for humans. That report has been followed by a new report, "Gaza: 10 years later", which states, inter alia, that "life for the average Palestinian in Gaza is getting more and more wretched"; and that "most of the projections for 2020 have in fact deteriorated even further and faster than anticipated".

This alarming assessment must be taken seriously and requires immediate remedial action. We continue to call for the lifting of the Israeli blockade and an end to Israel's constant attacks against Gaza and the Palestinian population living there. The risk of implosion of the situation and another devastating cycle of violence must be averted at all costs, and the dignity and humanity of the Palestinian people living there must be restored, along with their hopes for an end to this nightmare and a better future, hopes which are rapidly and dangerously diminishing.

Before concluding, we are compelled to share just some of the many crimes perpetrated by the occupying Power in the period since our previous letter to you:

18 June 2017

- Israeli naval occupying forces opened fire at Palestinian fishing boats off the coast of Gaza City, forcing the fishermen to sail back to shore fearing for their lives.
- A Palestinian man was injured when his vehicle flipped over after being chased by occupying forces near Surif in Al-Khalil (Hebron).

19 June 2017

- Occupying forces detained 21 Palestinians, including a blind man, in predawn raids in the West Bank.

20 June 2017

- Israeli occupying forces detained at least 17 Palestinians during overnight raids across the West Bank.
- Occupying forces shot and killed a Palestinian near the illegal Qalandiya military checkpoint in Ramallah.

21 June 2017

- Occupying forces detained at least 16 Palestinians in raids across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.
- Israeli bulldozers continued, for the second day in a row, levelling Palestinian lands south of Nablus in preparation for new illegal settlement construction.

22 June 2017

- Israeli military bulldozers entered the northern Gaza Strip and levelled lands near the Jabalia refugee camp.

23 June 2017

- Israeli occupying forces detained seven Palestinians during raids across the northern West Bank.

24 June 2017

- The occupying Power denied a Palestinian teenager, Khalid Ghamri (age 17), an exit permit to travel from the besieged Gaza Strip to Jerusalem for medical treatment after the boy was shot and critically injured by occupying forces on 23 May 2017.

26 June 2017

- Dozens of Israeli settlers, under the protection of Israeli occupying forces, raided an area near the village of Sanur in Janin and shouted racist and anti-Arab epithets at Palestinian civilians.

28 June 2017

- Israeli occupying forces detained at least 14 Palestinians, including a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, in overnight raids across the West Bank.
- Israeli occupying forces took down and destroyed at least 60 solar panels in the isolated village of Jubbit al-Dhib, east of Bethlehem.

- Israeli settlers from the illegal settlement of "Yitzhar" raided Burin in Nablus, igniting a fire on lands near the village before fleeing the scene.
- Iyad Munir Arafat Ghaith (age 23) was shot and killed by occupying forces in a raid in Al-Khalil (Hebron).

30 June 2017

- Israeli occupying forces detained at least five Palestinians during overnight raids across the West Bank as a Palestinian teenage girl was beaten by occupying soldiers in Al-Khalil (Hebron).
- Occupying forces detained a 15-year-old Palestinian and attempted to detain a 10-year-old child in a raid in the area of Kurum al-Qamar in the Silwan neighbourhood of Occupied East Jerusalem, while occupying forces handed out demolition orders to two Palestinian families in the Wadi Hulwah area of Silwan.

2 July 2017

- Dozens of Palestinians were injured, at least one seriously, and one young man was detained in Occupied East Jerusalem.

3 July 2017

- Occupying forces detained 18 Palestinians in predawn military raids carried out across the West Bank.

5 July 2017

- A group of Israeli settlers violently attacked and beat Hisham Raghib Abu Isha (age 22) on Shuhada' street, in the Old City of Al-Khalil (Hebron), while occupying forces stood by watching.
- Israeli occupying forces detained at least 30 Palestinians, including three teenagers and a disabled man, during military raids across the West Bank.

6 July 2017

- Israeli occupying forces assaulted Palestinian residents during a raid in the Occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan; two Palestinians were detained.

7 July 2017

- Omar Ahmad Issa (age 37) was killed after being run over by an Israeli settler west of Bethlehem.

8 July 2017

- A Palestinian infant, Abd al-Rahman Barghouti (18 months), died some two months after suffering from tear gas inhalation when occupying forces shot tear gas at Palestinian homes in the village of Aboud.

10 July 2017

- Occupying forces shot and killed Mohammad Ibrahim Jibril (age 24), from Tuqu', south of Bethlehem, following an alleged car-ramming attack.
- Occupying forces detained 14 Palestinians, including two young minors, during raids across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

11 July 2017

- A Palestinian child, Nour Hamdan (age 13) lost his eye after Israeli occupying forces shot him with a sponge-tipped bullet in the Occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Isawiyah.

12 July 2017

- Israeli occupying forces shot and killed two young Palestinians, Aws Muhammad Youssif Salameh (age 17) and Saad Nasser Hassan Abd al-Fattah Salah (age 20), and injured at least two others after a violent military raid into Jenin refugee camp.
- Occupying forces detained at least 23 Palestinians in predawn detention raids across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.
- Occupying forces detained a United Nations official based in the Gaza Strip, Hamdan Muhammad Hassan Timraz (age 61), the assistant regional director for the United Nations Department of Safety and Security in the Gaza Strip, at the "Erez" crossing.
- The so-called "Israeli municipality" in Jerusalem approved the construction of 800 new settlement units in Occupied East Jerusalem.

13 July 2017

- Israeli occupying forces detained seven Palestinians during military raids and search campaigns carried out across the West Bank.
- Occupying forces opened live fire towards Palestinian shepherds and farmers to the east of the town of Juhr al-Dik, south-east of Gaza.
- Occupying forces raided two Palestinian media agencies in Al-Khalil (Hebron) and seized equipment.

14 July 2017

- Israeli settlers threw stones at Palestinian cars passing by the village of Fardis to the east of Bethlehem.
- A Palestinian youth, Barra' Hamamdeh (age 18), was shot dead and two others sustained gunshot wounds fired by Israeli occupying forces in Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem.

16 July 2017

- Israeli settlers set up five illegal caravans on lands near the village of Khadir, to the south of Bethlehem.
- The occupying Power's so-called "ministerial committee for legislation affairs" approved a bill that prohibits the division of Jerusalem city in any future peace deal with the Palestinians.
- Occupying forces shot and killed Ammar Tirawi (age 34) near the village of Nabi Salih, north-west of Ramallah.

17 July 2017

- Israeli occupying forces seized at least 70 dunums (70,000 m^2) of Palestinian land in the village of Jaba', north-west of Bethlehem.

- Israeli naval occupying forces shot and injured two unarmed Palestinian fishermen who were working off the coast of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip.

- Israeli occupying forces detained at least 16 Palestinians and set up multiple roadblocks during overnight military raids across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

In the light of all of these ongoing Israeli violations and as evidenced by the mounting list of human rights violations and international humanitarian law violations, Israel, the occupying Power, remains in complete disrespect and contempt of the law, causing endless suffering and anguish for the Palestinian people and destruction to the land of the State of Palestine. We call for urgent action to compel Israel to completely halt all of its crimes against the Palestinian people. We also call for an end to its illegal colonization of the Occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem. All measures aimed at altering the demography, character and status of the occupied territory must be immediately and completely ceased, including all such measures affecting the historic status quo at the Haram al-Sharif.

This is imperative to stem the deterioration and reverse the dangerous reality on the ground. Collective action must be undertaken to uphold international law and to give meaning to the many relevant United Nations resolutions that remain unimplemented, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). The time is long overdue for the international community, with the Security Council at the forefront, to uphold its responsibilities and to stop Israel from acting as a State above the law and to finally end this illegal occupation in all its manifestations.

This letter is in follow-up to our 614 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 16 June 2017 (A/ES-10/755-S/2017/513) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer
of the State of Palestine to the United Nations